

# Strategies to Increase Participation

- Consider what the competition is doing. Prepare similar types of food, use similar types of packaging, and name school breakfast menus in a similar way.
- Make the cafeteria the “place to be” first thing in the morning. Use decorations to give the cafeteria a fun and exciting atmosphere. Obtain promotional material from outside sources or use artwork created by students. Some schools also show videos, and others play music. If space permits, offer a variety of settings, such as a TV area, senior area, etc.
- Survey students to see what breakfast items they currently eat and where they generally eat breakfast. If it is not possible to meet some of the recommendations, be sure to let students know why. Surveys have shown that many older students prefer non-traditional foods for breakfast, such as pizza.
- Have a taste-testing with students prior to putting new breakfast items on the menu. Offer small, sample-size portions to students during breakfast or lunch, or arrange for a taste-testing to be done at another time of the day. Advertise the results of the taste-testing when putting the new food on the menu.
- Involve students in menu planning, asking them to take into consideration students’ preferences, labor, food costs and nutritional value. Promote those menus that were developed with the help of students.
- Work with teachers to link classroom instruction with the cafeteria. For example, tie geography into the breakfast menu by offering typical breakfast foods eaten in other countries; invite older students or adults to read to younger students during breakfast; or work with the art or health teacher to have students create posters with food, nutrition or health messages. Be sure teachers advertise to their classes that the School Breakfast Program supports what students are learning in the classroom.
- Offer incentives to students and staff who regularly eat School Breakfast. Possible incentives could be to give school staff breakfast at a reduced price after a certain number of meals are eaten in the cafeteria, or to give a small prize to students who eat school breakfast for a certain period of time.

For more ideas, please contact the Team Nutrition Program at (406) 994-5641.

# Fun Breakfast Promotions

**Teddy Bear Breakfast** - Have students bring their favorite stuffed bear to breakfast. Offer Teddy Grahams on the breakfast menu. Give students a picture of a bear to color, which they can turn in to be judged. Award a prize to the winner.

**Pajama Party** - Ask students and staff to wear pajamas to school. Hold a contest and award a prize to the student and staff member with the most colorful, silliest, or warmest pajamas.

**Celebrity Look-alike Contest** - Have students vote for the best look-alike, or take students' photographs and display them for their classmates to guess who they are supposed to be.

**Sports Day** - Hold this promotion during local youth league sign-ups for T-ball, soccer, etc. Invite a local sports personality to breakfast, and arrange a raffle or drawing for tickets to a local athletic event.

**Cereal Box Design Contest** - Ask the cafeteria staff to come up with a silly name for a new (fictional) cereal. Have students enter a contest to design the cereal box. Ask high school art students to judge the boxes. Award small prizes to all contestants and a grand prize to the winner. Approach cereal companies about donating prizes.

**Backwards Day** - Serve breakfast for lunch and lunch for breakfast. Encourage students and staff to wear their clothes backwards.

**Story Time** - Invite the principal, a teacher, or a community member to read a book to students at breakfast. Choose a story with a food theme and serve that item for breakfast. For example, feature "Green Eggs and Ham" for breakfast and read the Dr. Seuss book to students while they eat.

**New Food Items** - Advertise new food items before serving them at breakfast. Place posters and "teaser" signs promoting the items in the hallways and on cafeteria walls.

**Classroom Participation Contest** - Designate special weeks in the school year as contest weeks. Provide a gift to the class with the highest percentage of participation.

**Reference:** School Breakfast for First Class Learning Toolkit, developed by: Midwest 5-Start Child Nutrition Task Force. Available from NFSMI, 800-321-3054.